DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 237 484 SP 023 311

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TITLE A Developmental Curriculum for the Secondary School.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Group Dynamics; *Intellectual Development; *Interpersonal Competence; Learning Processes; Metacognition; Secondary Education; *Secondary School Curriculum; *Self Actualization; Social Action; Student Development
IDENTIFIERS *Developmental Curriculum

ABSTRACT

A secondary school curriculum which includes a significant focus on individual developmental goals is proposed. Emphasis is placed on students' intellectual development, self-management, and interpersonal and small group involvement. The basic content of the developmental curriculum is summarized to include acquisition of the knowledge to: (1) analyze, inquire into, and structure knowlege; (2) identify, formulate, judge, and solve problems encountered and anticipated in the environment; (3) acquire concepts and use these to build principles, taxonomies, and structures of knowledge; (4) analyze and formulate models as organizers and means for thinking about knowledge; and (5) acquire the skills necessary for thinking in the broadest sense, through the use of symbols, cognitive processes, and interaction with one's environment. The proposal focuses on the need to have teachers possess extensive preparation in these areas of study, and to make these goals a highly visible component of secondary education. (JD)

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A DEVELOPMENTAL CURRICULUM FOR THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Robert C. Hatfield

Curriculum in the secondary schools has been evolving during the past several decades influenced by educational commissions, legislative mandates and funding, social needs, advancement in knowledge, reflections on the philosophy of education, and the pyschology of learning. Although some degree of commonality in curriculum has been achieved in practice it might be stated that this agreement has not been reached by the public, governmental agencies, educational leaders and teachers, scholars in the disciplines, or business leaders. That we have to continue the dialogue and reach agreement on basic components of the curriculum seems apparent given the financial problems, political climate, and general criticism currently effecting schools.

There are several components to a secondary school curriculum but this proposal will give visibility to only one aspect which is in need of both redefining and extending. For lack of better terminology this component will be labeled the developmental curriculum. The subject content of the several academic disciplines, vocational area studies or other common courses will not be addressed here instead the focus is on those dimensions of curriculum which more directly relate to the broader goals of education. Within this context the emphasis is on that portion of the curriculum concerned with one's personal development which directly enhances the capacity to achieve the other intellectual and societal goals of the curriculum.

Definition of Development

Bronfenbrenner (1979) relates development to the interaction and exposure to one's environment and defines development as "...the person's evolving conception of the ecological environment, and his relation to it, as well as the person's growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter its properties" (p. 91). Klausmeier (1979) describes development as "a product of the

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reciprocal interaction of learning and maturation that occurs across relatively long time spans, not as preceding learning" (p. 5). Klausmeier (1979) also states that the processes do not emerge solely as a function of "...new and increasingly powerful mental operations, or processes, but emerge with learning and maturation under normal environmental conditions; environmental conditions that many persons experience and that stimulate and nurture their intellectual development" (p. 5).

Function of Schools

The focus of the developmental curriculum represents that substantive content derived from these definitions which can be related to the conditions of education as carried out in a school setting. Given the need to relate these concepts to the school we can gain further perspective from Goodlad (1979) who describes education as that which"...occurs in the individual; involves the whole of the individual; occurs in schools, homes, churches, and other institutions as well as through the press, radio, and television" (p. 34). Goodlad (1979) continues by defining schools specifically as of "...special significance because they and they alone were created to assure that a deliberate, systematic, and sustained process of education would go on in our country" (p. 34).

In addition, Goodlad (1979) states that;

> the school, as the institution charged exclusively with education, should take on only those social purposes that can be converted easily and naturally into educational goals and activities. The schools should take on the cultivation of those individual sensibilities long extolled in humanistic thought and the aims of education. These are the attributes of thought-understanding, relating, judging, integrating, reflecting, and the like - that require deliberate, systematic and sustained attention. (p. 106)

Description of Goals

A curriculum will be proposed relating developmental goals to functions of the school by drawing on suggestions of Egan (1979), Botkin (1979),

Klausmeier (1979), and Belth (1970). These authors provide a context in which developmental goals are described and justified as basic to education, which can be related to the secondary school level, and which reflect the critical function of schools for education.

Egan (1979) suggests a set of six life skills;

> skills relating to physical development,
> skills relating to intellectual development,
> self-management skills,
> value-clarification skills,
> the skills of interpersonal involvement, and
> the skills of small-group involvement. (p. 44)

In this proposal four of these skills will be suggested as most directly related to the central issue; intellectual development, self-managment, interpersonal involvement, and small-group involvement.

Skills relating to intellectual development include, the ability to translate knowledge into working knowledge, learning how to learn, and to problem solve. The need to translate knowledge into meaningful and working knowledge is supported by Klausmeier (1979), Belth (1979), and Botkin (1970). To be effective in this skill requires a person to relate what has been learned to actual problems of the environment and to base interpretations of experiences on personal knowledge. In other words, one needs the capability to extend; verbal knowledge into behavior, responses to events, and plans to modify behavior. A further key to learning is being able to understand the logic of problem solving and how to approach a situation by analysis using a systematic procedure.

Self-management skills imply that people can control their own behavior and that they possess a self discipline with both, the skills based on a knowledge of personality, and the social relations to achieve this level of behavior. Also important in using these skills of behavior is working with others; in helping situations, in understanding self and one's problems in relation to others, and the achievement of one's own goals (Egan, 1979).

The skills of interpersonal involvement include those needed to effectively

present oneself in a variety of situations, allow a person the freedom of self-disclosure, the expression of feelings and emotions to respond to various cognitive and emotional interactions, and to confront and challenge others in situations requiring such behavior for effective communication and goal achievement.

Small group involvement is a major activity of nearly all persons and the dynamics for participation and goal achievement are necessary skills to obtain success and satisfaction following these encounters. Further, much of the pattern of continuing lifelong education is predicated on an individual's capability of effectively interacting in such groups.

Botkin (1979) proposes an educational goal based on the concept of innovative learning which integrates components of initiation and participation. He indicates that;

> anticipation, as a critical part of innovative learning, is inseparable from an increased emphasis on conjectures, hypotheses, scenarios, simulations, models, trends, plans, long-term views, and an examination of the hidden implications of our actions-both in our individual thinking and in the debates of the society at large. (p. 23-29)

The focus of participation in this context is on social action, implementation, and decision making as a group focused on social benefits. Botkin (1979) describes this need for innovative learning as a bridge to connect "...the distance between growing complexity and our capacity to cope with it" (p. 6). He also states that "...learning means an approach, both to knowledge and to life, that emphasizes human initiative...and the process of preparing to deal with new situations" (p. 8). Further, Botkin (1979) suggests that mere problem solving is inadequate to bring about innovative learning but that in addition a person needs the capacity for "... problem detecting, problem perceiving, problem formulating, common understanding, and not be restricted merely to problem solving" (p. 30).

Klausmeier (1979) describes the attainment of concepts as basic to

learning and development using these concepts to "...understand principles, taxonomic relations, and solving problems" (p. 4). In this sense he describes not only the subject knowledge but the analytic skills to use with the subject or knowledge to identify concepts and how concepts are used to build principles, taxonomies, and structures of knowledge.

Belth (1970) states that, "symbols are a necessary means of communicating or establishing communion. As these symbols, beliefs and instruments are made to operate in the form of models and become more refined, more complex, more sophisticated, more subtle, more complete, more sensitive, more effective, culture itself becomes more forcefully directive of the lives of human beings" (p. 20). Belth (1979) also states that;

> ....the function itself (symbol making) requires a great deal of nurture and refinement. To the degree that this native power is refined, and brought to a level of development which in principle, but rarely in fact, he can reach by himself - to that degree does his environment improve, and greater possibilities for living, achieving, creating, become possible for him. (p. 31)

Belth actually is defining the various processes of thinking as symbol making and does not limit the definition of symbols to visual images or communication tools. In addition Belth (1979) describes the need and nature of model building as a further elaboration of symbols and thinking by indicating;

> the dilemmas that education faces in a world constantly in change arise from rapidly accumulating knowledge, and not simply from the mechanical breakdown in transmission. And this accumulation is itself dependent upon the invention of new, more refined categories and instrumentations by means of which our knowledge of the world and indeed life itself is shaped. (p. 33-34)

In this context Belth is describing the role of model building as a means both to structure the thinking and knowledge of what we currently know and for the purpose of identifying new ways of knowing the organizing knowledge.

Proposed Content

Using these suggestions as background the following goals are proposed for a developmental curriculum together with some supporting assumptions as the

basis on which they can be justified as part of the secondary school curriculum.

Prerequisite to these, however, is the acknowledgement that language acquisition and facility with the language is necessary to the success of this developmental curriculum and in the sense that it is basic to the type of knowledge being addressed it might also be considered as a necessary part of this curriculum. A further premise is that these educational goals are the responsibility of all professional educators.

The basic content of the developmental curriculum can be summarized to include the knowledge:

> to analyze, inquire into, and structure knowledge; to identify, formulate, judge and solve problems encountered and anticipated in the environment; to acquire concepts and use these to build principles, taxonomies, and structures of knowledge; to analyze and formulate models as organizers and means for thinking about knowledge; to acquire the skills necessary for thinking in the broadest sense through the use of symbols, cognitive processes, and interaction with one's environment.

This description of developmental curriculum is based on the following assumptions:

a. education is the system within the culture by which people acquire and develop the capability to respond to their environment.

b. the most essential part of education is to utilize and build on the basic knowledge already formulated as part of the culture.

c. knowledge of ourselves and of others is crucial to the utilization and development of an education.

d. self-learning is a primary goal of education.

e. the developmental goals of education are crucial to the effective acquisition and use of other curricular content.

f. there is a substantative content contained in the developmental curriculum which can be learned more effectively in a systematic educational format.

g. schools are the best institutions in which to provide a systematic study of the goals related to the developmental curriculum.

h. education which excludes the developmental curriculum will continually decrease in value.

i. the developmental curriculum will not be achieved without the personal competence of professional educators.

These suggestions for a developmental curriculum should not be immediately integrated into secondary schools except to the extent that teachers are already well prepared and have the knowledge and background required. Some people may say that we already teach the curriculum suggested. Certainly much of it is talked about, listed as major goals of education, and described as part of each teacher's course. That this curriculum is in fact taught, and that most teacher's now possess the knowledge to discuss in the necessary depth and have the necessary expertise to evaluate students on the proposed goals is, however, without supporting evidence.

Those person's interested in implementing this proposed curriculum are encouraged to analyze the readings on which it is based. Further, the underlying assumptions should be refined and modified as they relate to that body of research, philosophy, pyschology, and sociology, from which they are derived in order to provide a supportive position for implementation.

Summary

A secondary school curriculum which includes a significant focus on developmental goals has been proposed. These goals relate to personal capacities in the use of knowledge, thinking, being action oriented in relation to knowledge, developing new knowledge, and in how to know ourselves and others to be more effective in the use of and development of knowledge. This proposal represents more than just addressing what we say is currently taught in the implied curriculum but is focused on the need to have teachers possess extensive preparation in these areas of study, and in making these goals a highly visible component of secondary education.

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